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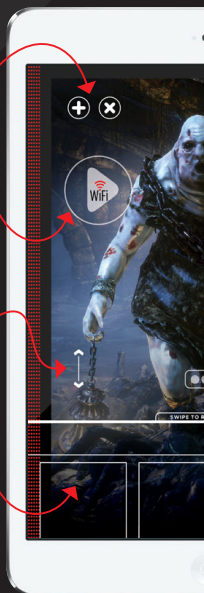
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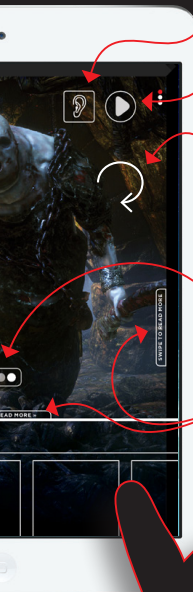


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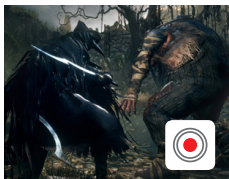
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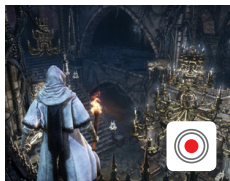
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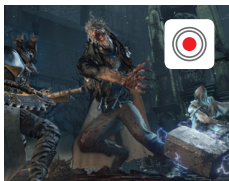
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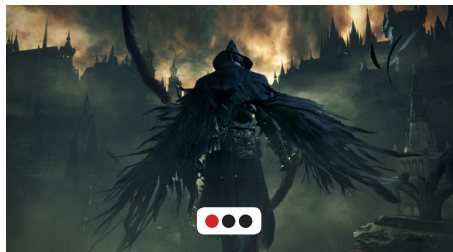
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TAKING BLOODBORNE ONLINE



FROM THE EDITOR



BORNE FOR GREATNESS?



INTRODUCTION

FROM SOULS TO SHOTGUNS

**AN INTRODUCTION
TO BLOODBORNE**



INTRODUCTION



**FORMAT:** PS4**PUBLISHER:** SONY**DEVELOPER:** FROM SOFTWARE**RELEASED:** OUT NOW **ONLINE:** YES**WEB:** WWW.PLAYSTATION.COM/EN-GB/GAMES/BLOODBORNE-PS4

Bloodborne is a game that's been almost impossible to ignore since it was first announced. Developed by the same team that brought us the brutally challenging Dark Souls series (preceded by *Demon's Souls*), we were pretty much sold from the start on

this hack-and-slash romp through a beautifully bleak gothic landscape.

However, *Bloodborne* is designed to be that little more welcoming to the not-so-hardcore crowd and while it's certainly not going to be easy – you will still die an awful lot – there is more of an emphasis on enjoying the adventure, and not just surviving it. What exactly is that adventure about? Well, as with previous From Software titles, the developer isn't giving too much away in terms of the storyline – that's for you to





unravel and figure out for yourself as you play through the campaign.

All we'll tell you is that it's set in the city of Yharnam, a classic twist on Victorian London that draws many a traveller in search of the powerful medicine rumoured to be found there – an elixir that beckons your character, known only as The Hunter, to pay a visit.

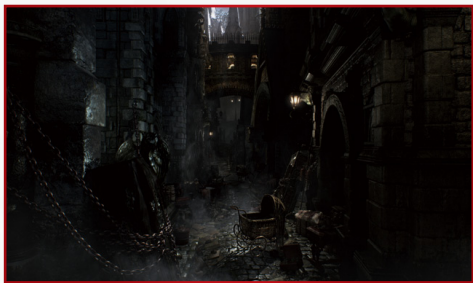
Unsurprisingly, all is not quite sunshine and rainbows and the city has instead been cursed by an endemic illness that leads to madness and mutation in



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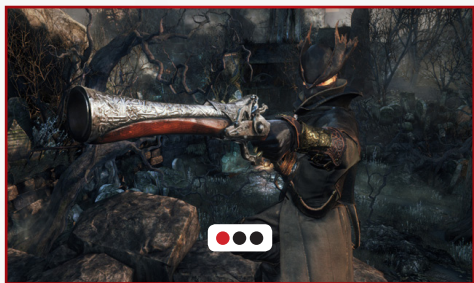
**“THERE IS MORE OF AN EMPHASIS ON
ENJOYING THE ADVENTURE AND NOT
JUST SURVIVING IT”**

a variety of grotesque and brilliantly inventive ways. As the game begins you know little more than that you wake up on doctor's table, are swiftly killed by a werewolf and resurrected with weapons courtesy of some impish minions known as Messengers – and so you head off into



the city ready to kill whatever man or monster crosses your path, while trying to unravel the mysteries and secrets that Yharnam hides within its darkened walls.

Much like those Souls games, you'll need to have 360-degree vision as enemies can jump from the shadows without warning and, once again, there's nothing as handy as a mini-map or objective markers to hold your hand. However, *Bloodborne* does swing the combat a little more in your favour, with added agility and firearms at your



“

**“THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG
ANSWERS, ONLY DEATH AND DESPAIR OR
SURVIVAL AND SWEET SATISFACTION”**

disposal. The guns are typically weak and are best used as a tool to knock an enemy back in absence of Dark Souls' shield – and it's more a combination of well-timed dodge rolls and swings with your transformable melee weapons that will provide the meat of the combat.



This makes *Bloodborne* feel that little less challenging once you do get into a fight, but rest assured you'll still need to pick your paths carefully. Do you turn left to face that baying mob, driven mad by the hunt for beasts, or turn right and walk into a showdown with a towering Malformed Beast that you should probably level yourself up a bit for first? There are no right or wrong answers here, only death and despair or survival and sweet, sweet satisfaction. *Bloodborne* is your fight, and your story alone to tell.

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HISTORY OF FROM SOFTWARE



MONSTERS, MECHS AND BAD TANKS

**A LOOK BACK AT SOME
OF FROM SOFTWARE'S
PREVIOUS TITLES**

HISTORY OF FROM SOFTWARE





1994-2002 – KING'S FIELD

Although some might say *Bloodborne* draws from the Dark Souls series, which in turn takes its 'spiritual sequel' cues from *Demon's Souls*, From Software's first game, *King's Field*, actually leads the way. This first-person fantasy adventure spawned three sequels, confusingly out of sync in the west where *King's Field II* was the 'original' game released.



1997-2013 – ARMORED CORE

Much like King's Field, From's next big franchise, and its real breakthrough in the west, also began life as a PlayStation exclusive, only Armored Core was a third-person mech-based brawler that has seen players piloting a range of towering and heavily-armed robots over the years. 2013's *Verdict Day* was the 15th in the series and we doubt it's finished yet.



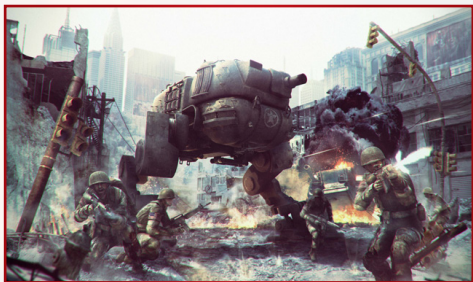
FEBRUARY 2009 – DEMON'S SOULS

Another PlayStation-only title, *Demon's Souls* is the game that probably shaped From Software's recent portfolio. Though echoing many of the traits of fantasy RPGs, *Demon's Souls* was lauded for being a genuinely challenging title at a time when gaming was mostly an FPS-friendly place. It also let players look into, and interact with, other gamers' experiences.



SEPTEMBER 2011 – DARK SOULS

Building on the foundations of *Demon's Souls*, *Dark Souls* was almost ball-crushingly difficult for newcomers, which could put off early adopters short on perseverance. However, the trick was that dying was always part of the learning process and avoiding those same mistakes to defeat each enemy was a supremely satisfying experience for those who battled on.



JUNE 2012 – STEEL BATTALION: HEAVY ARMOR

We could have given a nod to the decent *Chromehounds* or mostly enjoyable *Ninja Blade*, but we've chosen to acknowledge that even the best can get it wrong at times – and through a combination of bad design and Kinect's inability to work as accurately as the devs had wanted on the Xbox 360, *Steel Battalion: Heavy Armor* was a nice idea that was almost totally unplayable.



MARCH 2014 – DARK SOULS II

Dark Souls II was an equally intimidating sequel even if it didn't rate *quite* as highly as the first game (perhaps because original director Hidetaka Miyazaki was off making *Bloodborne* at the time!) but it was still a great adventure that upped the production values and added co-op and PvP elements. A new-gen *Scholar of the First Sin* upgrade is out on 03 April.



MEET THE HUNTER



MEET THE HUNTER

**GET READY TO BE BORN
INTO A BLOODY BATTLE**

MEET THE HUNTER





FRIGHT NIGHT

**THIS STORY TRAILER SHOULD HELP TO
SET A RATHER OMINOUS SCENE**

As befitting the Dark Souls games, precious little information is given on the lead character other than a token name: The Hunter. Presumably this, along with your clear talent with a blade, relates to your profession and during your earliest exploits in Yharnam and the Hunter's Dream (a safe refuge



you can respawn in after dying to re-equip yourself), you'll meet several people who'll give details into a Hunter's lifestyle.

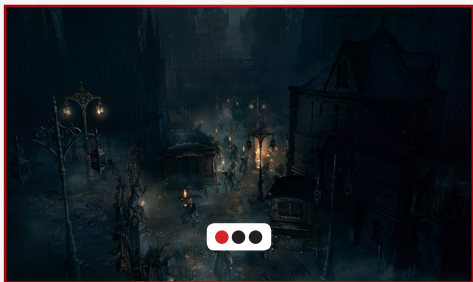
Indeed, if you see a lit lantern near a door or window, it's usually a sign that there's an NPC in there which will likely lead to a conversation and possibly a side-quest or two. Several of these rather mysterious characters will suggest that it's your job to clean up the streets of the numerous freaks and creatures roaming around and offer clues to the city's background and your role within it.



“

**“SHAPE YOUR OWN STORY OF SURVIVAL AND
BLOOD-SOAKED HEROISM”**

Despite your apparent anonymity, and the fact you'll rarely see your own face or body beneath the broad duster hat and flowing jacket, *Bloodborne* still has a richly detailed customisation process – one lifted almost entirely from *Dark Souls* but that's just fine with us. You can choose a male or female lead, and

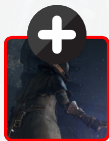


adjust your looks and features with numerous sliders but none of these choices will really define you.

The only notable decision comes in choosing one of nine Origins stories for your Hunter (such as Lone Survivor or Military Veteran), with your selection providing a few pointers to your past that will tweak your attributes and powers slightly in one direction. There's no class system to speak of other than this initial choice, though it will still have some impact on your playing style.



However, it's your future choices on weapons, item selection and how you upgrade your stats that will determine exactly what kind of Hunter you become.



Once you step into the action, and your first unavoidable death, you'll be given your first choice of weapons, with one melee option – the iconic Saw Cleaver our preferred choice – and either pistol or blunderbuss as your initial firearm.



There's no clear indication of where to go or what to do, though some typically low-level enemies will give you a chance to test out your new weapons without too much trouble as you first start looking around – but you're pretty much left to your own devices.

Although the game is designed to funnel most players down a fairly similar path, what follows from here is for you to decide for yourself and to shape your own story of survival and blood-soaked heroism.

HUNTER'S DREAM



HUNTER'S DREAM

**A WELCOME REFUGE FROM
THE BLOODY CARNAGE**

As with the Souls games there is no Pause button in *Bloodborne* – though it's worth noting that it does auto-save regularly, so you'll never lose much progress if you quit out or die whilst on the toilet (except for your Blood Echoes currency). However, there is some refuge in the form of the Hunter's Dream, a safe haven that acts as a central hub for your Hunter and enables you to modify and upgrade them away from the action.

You'll first encounter this place after your early unavoidable death, which is where you'll meet the Messengers for the first time and be gifted your initial weapons, but regular returns to Hunter's Dream, either post-death or by using fast travel lamps or Mark of the Hunter tokens, will grant you access to some very useful features, as showcased over the page.

HUNTER'S DREAM





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COMBAT GUIDE



FIGHT NIGHT

**GETTING TO GRIPS WITH
BLOODBORNE'S COMBAT**





BORNE TO KILL

THIS GAMEPLAY VIDEO GIVES A GLIMPSE INTO THE BLOODY ACTION

Aside from the beautifully terrifying visuals and the engaging mystery surrounding Yharnam, one of the great features of *Bloodborne* is how its combat manages to be both simple to pick up and play, yet with enough depth and dexterity to require true mastery if you want to make it to the end credits.



Button-mashing will only get you so far and you'll need to find a certain rhythm to suit your preferred playing style but, crucially, the combat just feels a little weightier and that much more aggressive than in the Dark Souls games.

On a basic level you'll find yourself equipped with a sword and a firearm. As mentioned, the guns aren't all that powerful and are designed more as a staggering tool to keep enemies at bay while you ready your melee weapon for the kill. In the early stages you

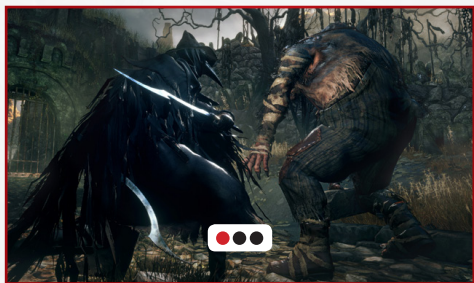


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“BLOODBORNE CAN OFTEN FEEL LIKE A FAIR FIGHT. NOT ALWAYS, OF COURSE...”

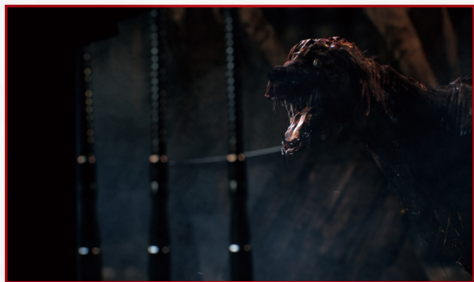
won't need too much more than simple combinations of the two, with the dodge roll move (there is no shield here, remember!) a regular requirement to keep yourself out of harms reach.

As things progress, besides needing to upgrade your armoury you'll also need to experiment with each weapon's



transformed state. These are simple switches at the tap of a button that can turn your melee weapon into something slightly different.

For example, the Saw Cleaver has an extendable handle that turns it from a close-quarters tool into something with a greater reach, and all the better for crowd control or fighting at a distance. Other weapons might split into dual-wielding options or hard-hitting two-handed bludgeons (both at the expense of your firearm).



The idea is that you've got greater depth to your attacking options beyond those basic moves. Molotovs can also prove a useful weapon, especially if you find yourself out of your depth in those early moments, while even a simple torch can be enough to keep some enemies at bay for a short respite.



As mentioned, button-mashing isn't to be recommended as the enemy AI is pretty smart and typically more aggressive than you might be used to, and so you're better



off learning enemy attack patterns and looking to dodge and counter rather than going toe-to-toe.

The game's Visceral Strike option is testament to this and if you can time a firearm shot to hit an attacking enemy, it will stagger them to the point where you can land a single brutal blow that will kill all but the toughest of foes. If you can get this nailed even mini-boss battles won't seem quite so intimidating.

Perhaps the most crucial element to combat, however, is knowing when to

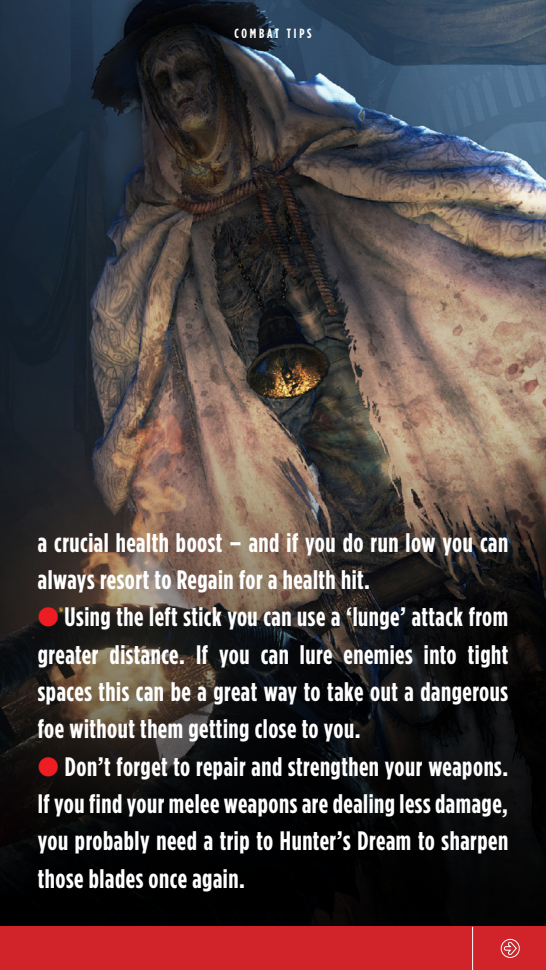


pick a fight and when to walk the other way. False bravado earns you little but lost Blood Echoes when you die and there's no shame in seeking the path of least resistance until you've levelled your Hunter up a notch or two.

If you do find yourself squaring up for a battle, though, you can feel safe that *Bloodborne* has a healthy repertoire of options and can often actually feel like a fair fight. Not always, of course, and so you'd better master a few new tricks by the time those bigger boss battles roll in!

OUR TOP COMBAT TIPS

- If you find yourself low on ammo heading into a fight, tapping up on the D-pad will grant you five extra Quicksilver bullets in exchange for a small amount of health – health you can quickly snag back using the Regain system if you're lucky.
- Don't hold back on Blood Vials! They're in surprisingly good supply and can be used in the middle of combat for

A character wearing a white hooded cloak with a large bell hanging from a chain around their neck. They are holding a flaming torch in their right hand. The cloak has some bloodstains and a dark, patterned garment is visible underneath. The background is dark and atmospheric.

a crucial health boost – and if you do run low you can always resort to Regain for a health hit.

● Using the left stick you can use a ‘lunge’ attack from greater distance. If you can lure enemies into tight spaces this can be a great way to take out a dangerous foe without them getting close to you.

● Don’t forget to repair and strengthen your weapons. If you find your melee weapons are dealing less damage, you probably need a trip to Hunter’s Dream to sharpen those blades once again.

CHALICE DUNGEONS

GOING UNDERGROUND



**TACKLING BLOODBORNE'S
CHALICE DUNGEONS**

CHALICE DUNGEONS





As an extension of Yharnam, beneath its already grim surface lurks a multi-tiered network of inhuman ruins known as the Chalice Dungeons. Originally home to a graveyard and a place of slumber for the city's natives, to access these you'll need to perform a ritual with a holy chalice – but each time you enter, the dungeon could be a completely different proposition.

The Chalice Dungeons are like a bonus game mode offering a maze of



monsters and treasure in the ultimate risk-reward quest. *Bloodborne* offers up a handful of standard maps, or dungeons that will be the same each time you access them. However, as long as you can get yourself online it also gives you the option for procedurally-generated dungeons that randomise the layout, appearance and enemies (type, number and location) within it.

These maps can range from dark hallways and rocky corridors, to ornate ballrooms, murky swamps and



“

**“IF YOU CAN GET OUT ALIVE THERE ARE
SOME PRETTY SWEET REWARDS IN TERMS OF
LOOT AND UPGRADES FOR YOUR TROUBLES”**

more – though none of them will be particularly welcoming, with plenty of hidden traps and other quick and easy reasons to die. However, if you can get out alive there are some pretty sweet rewards in terms of loot and upgrades for your troubles.



You can play the Chalice Dungeons in single-player or in co-op, and you can also share your generated maps over the Network for others to play, or download their maps to try out for yourself.



We'd recommend exploring the fiendish maps with friends if you can, because *Bloodborne* is rarely a game for the faint hearted and there's always some solace in knowing you're not alone in the dark!

BLOODBORNE ONLINE

FRIENDS IN NEED

**A BRIEF GUIDE TO
BLOODBORNE'S ONLINE OPTIONS**



BLOODBORNE ONLINE





Much like the Dark Souls series, multiplayer isn't a huge component of the *Bloodborne* experience, and possibly not something everyone would embrace, but the option to call in allies to play through sections in co-op is certainly welcome. You can use the Bell Maidens to call up on up to two other friends (or strangers) to join you for a boss fight, and there's no shortage of occasions where a lone warrior wouldn't appreciate a little back-up – or at least someone else to draw the wrath of your powerful foe.



You can also play through the Chalice Dungeons in a three-player team, though how co-operative you want to be is up to you. It is worth sticking together, however, as players can vanish if the host dies, if they wander off and get killed or if the host doesn't appreciate their efforts and chooses to banish them. At various other moments in the campaign you will also be able to call upon various NPCs for some additional AI support.

The option for player-versus-player multiplayer comes through the option to



“

**“THE BELL MAIDEN CAN SUMMON A HUMAN
INVADER TO JOIN ANOTHER PERSON’S
ONGOING ADVENTURE”**

invade another person’s game. If you have this turned on (and it is easily switched off if you don’t want this extra hassle), the Bell Maiden can summon a human invader to join another person’s ongoing adventure and it becomes a simple stand-off to see who the last Hunter standing is – with the



invader getting a healthy reward if they can kill the host.

The more asynchronous forms of multiplayer first introduced in *Demon's Souls* are also available, with Messengers able to leave messages that can pop up in other Hunters' games. You can also see the tombstones of players who have previously died in the same area that you're in (which you can interact with to learn from their mistakes) and watch phantoms of those currently playing the same location in (near) real time.



“

**“FOR MANY BLOODBORNE IS AN ADVENTURE
YOU’LL WANT TO EXPERIENCE ALONE BUT
THE ONLINE OPTIONS ARE SOLID”**

It’s certainly not a multiplayer to rival the mainstream, and for many *Bloodborne* is an adventure you’ll want to experience alone, but the online options are a solid part of the package and, if nothing else, these smaller touches are a nice reminder that you’re not completely alone out there.

MUSIC OF BLOODBORNE



THE MUSIC OF BLOODBORNE

**A LITTLE AURAL PLEASURE
TO EASE THE TENSION**





TRACKS OF MY FEARS

**A HAUNTING RECORDING FROM
BLOODBORNE'S SOUNDTRACK**



CLOSING VERDICT



CLOSING VERDICT

CLOSING VERDICT





READY FOR LAUNCH

**A LITTLE DEVELOPER INSIGHT AHEAD
OF THE GAME HITTING THE SHELVES**

We mentioned how we were pretty much sold on *Bloodborne* at a very early stage – well we’re well and truly hooked now. To simply pigeon-hole it as “Dark Souls with a slightly more welcoming entry level” would be to do the game a disservice. It’s still a brutally tough and frequently punishing



(not to mention surreal) experience but once again there's a feeling that failure is all part of the learning curve.

The extra freedom afforded to the player by the reworked combat system neatly shifts the gameplay more towards controlled aggression rather a constant fear of death. Though maybe not on a par with *The Order: 1886*, it's still a hugely impressive visual achievement (and a far better game to go with it) and the sense of horror and despair is never too far from your eyes, or your soul.



“

**“IT’S CERTAINLY A WORTHY NEW CHAMPION
FOR THE PS4, AND THE NEW-GENERATION
CONSOLES AS A WHOLE”**

As a result of this, and the simple fact that no matter how good you think you are you will die an awful lot, we wouldn’t quite go so far as to call *Bloodborne* ‘fun’ – but as an experience it’s about as compelling, challenging and rewarding as anything we’ve played of late, and it’s

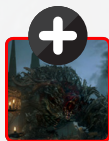


certainly a worthy new champion for the PS4, and the new-generation consoles as a whole.

If you own a PS4 it's definitely worth a play, and if you haven't bloodied your hands with those Dark Souls games and feel battered, bruised and possibly bored with it after an hour or two, PLEASE persevere with it, because there will come a time when everything clicks into place, you'll discover your own formula for success amidst all the death and finally be able to embrace *Bloodborne* as



something the gaming world really could do with a lot more of.



If you don't own a PS4, well then it sucks to be you right now. We're not quite ready to champion *Bloodborne* as a single reason to spend a few hundred notes on a brand new console but Xbox, Nintendo and PC gamers are certainly missing out on one of the best games of the year so far.

It will crush you, smash you into pieces, kick you when you're down and



“

**“TO ENDURE, SURVIVE AND THRIVE
IN BLOODBORNE IS ONE OF THE MOST
SATISFYING GAMING EXPERIENCES”**

often leave you utterly bewildered and lost in the darkness, but to endure, survive and thrive in *Bloodborne* is one of the most satisfying gaming experiences you're likely to encounter. So, put *Candy Crush* down, grow a pair and come join the fight.

NEXT ISSUE

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ISSUE 025

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